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Tips and tools from your school library

# LOW HANGING FRUIT

## Effective Searching Tips

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We all know it's easy to "Google" something to get an answer, especially when we're not sure where to start a search. It's hard to overlook the large quantity of results a search engine might provide over library databases like Ebsco's Explora and History Reference Center that have more involved searching methods. And, contrary to what many believe, web search engines will not find the same content you get in a library database. Those subscription databases provided by the library have exclusive content support curriculum needs.

Here are some tips for more success with your database searching:

**Tip #1 – Keywords versus Natural Language.** Most search engines will allow you to just type in a question, "How did Einstein discover relativity theory?" This results in about 80,000 websites. In a database, the searcher would want to focus on key words like relativity,

theory, and discover; which results in just over 100 articles.

**Tip #2 – Consider word groupings and alternatives.** An expert searcher would use the same words as above and group phrases with quotation marks. Plus, consider alternatives to words. Example: Einstein "relativity theory" discovery.

**Tip #3 – Use Boolean Operators.** Most search functions allow Boolean search-

ing. Boolean allows for use of "and," "or," and "not" in a search string. Most search interfaces will default to "and" even if you don't put it in there, but some don't. It's a good idea to use your own terms. A search for "relativity theory AND NOT Einstein" will show results that do not include the word "Einstein" in the article. The use of "or" allows for an expansion of the search, such as, "relativity theory" OR "general relativity."

**Tip #4 – Use Advanced Search Options.** It's not necessary to know how to form an advanced Boolean search phrase. Search tools often have built-in forms to help the searcher easily identify which terms to include or expand (AND, OR) and which to ignore (NOT). In addition, advanced search options in library databases often allow the option to limit results by appropriate reading levels, academic and/or peer reviewed publications, and date ranges for timely content.

**Tip #5 – Know when to go to which tool.** It's important to recognize search engines and databases as tools. Know when you need a hammer and when you need a wrench. Search engines are great tools for finding quick information like the population of a country or background information before settling on a research topic. Library databases provide depth, include only trusted sources of information, and provide a more ability to limit results to save the researcher's time.

## LINKS TO MORE LEARNING



### Library Database vs Open Web

A comparison table showing the information you can get using different search tools. From Reynolds Community College Library  
<http://libguides.reynolds.edu/c.php?g=143583&p=939857>

### Database Vs. Search Engine (video)

Watch as a library user learns how the library's database would have helped him create a better presentation.  
<https://youtu.be/luosi12zsts>

### The Internet vs Databases

From the Los Angeles Public Library Teen Web, it outlines the difference and when to use which tool.  
<http://www.lapl.org/teens/homework-help/internet-vs-databases>

## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS



### Use Ebsco's Curriculum Standards

A number of the databases provided through your school library allow for easy searching of content tied directly to curriculum standards used in Idaho. This is a great way to locate content to support lesson plans and classroom learning. Ebsco's Explora database has an easy link to Curriculum Standards at the top of the search page.

Ebsco's Curriculum Standards [Help Sheet](#) has more information on using this feature.

## DIGITAL TOOLS



### LiLi.org

The full group of free online databases available through Idaho libraries. Users will find articles from popular publications, academic journals, newspapers, and encyclopedias.

### Explora Secondary

A great first-stop for high school research needs. The Explora Secondary interface draws in content from a variety of databases meeting the needs of today's students.



